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## AN AGRICULTURAL POLICY FOR THE UNITED STATES IN WAR TIME

BY GIFFORD PINCHOT,

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One of the outstanding facts which is least recognized among the great facts that this war is gradually forcing upon the attention of the world—perhaps the outstanding fact of all—is that the world will never be the same again; in fact the change has already been made. We have passed already into a new world order which has laid the foundations of a new point of view not only in world affairs but in national and civic affairs as well.

I do not mean by a “new point of view,” a view that has never been advocated before, but a view that has never before been widely adopted; and that view, if a conservationist may say so, is the point of view of the conservation policy. It is the point of view of planned and orderly development to reach distant ends.

Hitherto, in all our national affairs, we have gone where the pressure was least. I do not say that as a criticism; I state it as a fact. It is necessarily so in the early stages of any civilization. We have yielded to the thrust that sent us this way or that way without accepted plan or definite conception of where we were going, and this has led us, as it necessarily has led every other nation in a similar stage of development, to haphazard excursions in this direction and in that. The condition which we have now reached, not only in agriculture but in every phase of our national life, is a result far more of the action of forces which we did not count upon

in advance than it is of any planned and definite effort to reach any definite condition by following any definite line.

Is it desirable to reverse this national habit of mind? The answer is that perhaps this is an academic question, for we have been forced into a set of circumstances which compel us to adopt a new point of view. We have reached a situation in which the indispensable basis of national survival is a higher degree of national efficiency than we have yet sought and a more conscious pursuit of distant aims than has ever been characteristic of the American people. We are thrown into a world order molded upon a plane of efficiency such as we in the United States, efficient as we have been in many respects, have, in my judgment, never conceived to be possible.

We shall find ourselves, after the war, forced into competition for commercial survival with nations, driven by the pressure of debts unimagined before into an absolute necessity for conquering foreign trades as the first means, after food, of self-preservation. In order to hold our position we shall be compelled, in my judgment, to reorganize our national point of view and plan where we mean to go, instead of allowing ourselves to drift where it is easiest to go, as we have done about so many things in so many directions.

If that is true, have we reached a stage where the adoption of a definite agricultural policy for the United States is demanded? Is such a policy possible? It seems to me to be inevitable in view of the known facts of the world's situation.

The essential consideration, as I see it, is the change in the direction of agriculture in the nations that are at war, because of facts brought about by the war. What I mean is this:

The world is short of livestock. Mr. Hoover's figures give us a world deficiency of 28,000,000 cattle, 32,000,000 hogs and 54,000,000 sheep; or a total shortage of livestock in the world of about 115,000,000 head. The submarine warfare means that we can no longer supply to the nations of Europe the additional feeds required in the past to keep their supply of domestic animals up to its normal point.

For example, an embargo has just been placed on cotton-seed cake, of which we have been shipping abroad a million tons a year. That means a reduction in cattle abroad. We can no longer ship corn as we used to do. That fact is reflected in the English govern-

ment's decision to reduce English cattle on a very considerable scale.

The French supply of livestock is short already. Since the beginning of the war, it has fallen below the pre-war average 16 per cent in cattle, 33 per cent in sheep, and 38 per cent in hogs; and similar figures might be adduced for other countries.

The first fact then, as I see it, is the large shortage, and the necessity for an increase, in livestock abroad.

The second fact is that after the war, European farmers will be forced in the direction of grain production. They will have less stock to eat their feed; therefore they will grow less feed. They will have a larger demand for grain for human food; therefore they will grow more grain. In other words, the agricultural policy of the European nations, from the very nature of the situation, will be driven in the direction of grain rather than livestock.

What then ought we to do both in relation to what they are going to do and to our own situation here?

Our first great contribution to the war is food, and of food, wheat first of all. We shall doubtless produce next year a crop of wheat so large that it may reach even a billion bushels. In other words, our own coming increase in wheat, coupled with the certainty of larger European production of wheat after the war, fairly removes the wheat question from the debatable field.

But not livestock. What is our own situation in livestock? The first great fact is—and it is true also of grains—that our per capita production has dropped. There has been within the last year or two, however, no decrease—indeed, a slight increase—in absolute numbers. For example, we have 102 per cent this year of the cattle that we had last year, and 103 per cent of dairy cows. There has been a slight decrease, amounting to only 300,000, in the number of hogs.

In addition, then, to considerations arising from the European nations, we find ourselves faced in this country with a situation which leads to the belief that we shall have a very alarming shortage of livestock in the near future.

Take, for example, the question of hogs. In Iowa, the greatest hog producing state, estimates show there are 20 per cent less hogs now than there were a year ago; in Missouri, 18 per cent less, in the United States, as a whole, about 7,000,000 fewer hogs than a year ago.

Why? Because of a doubt on the part of the farmer that it will pay to raise hogs. The high price of grain, coupled with the uncertainties of the market, has persuaded the farmers of a large part of this country that it is not worth their while to raise more pigs. The result appears in an immediate decrease, which will be reflected in a shortage in supply later on, just when the war demands a very large increase.

The question is not merely one of keeping our normal amount of livestock or producing our normal amount of meat and especially of pork products. It is a question of very largely increasing that supply, just exactly as it was in the matter of wheat, because it is necessary in order to win the war. Without it we handicap our allies and we endanger the winning of the war. Yet as things stand today we face the probability not merely of no increase in pork products, but in the face a tremendously enhanced demand, we face an actual decrease.

Take now the matter of beef cattle in the west. Last winter was a very hard one. The losses were very large. In Texas the drought of this summer has resulted in sending prematurely to market large numbers of cattle and in the death of very many others; and such examples might be multiplied. So in beef cattle also, we find ourselves threatened with a decrease, both because of bad seasons and because of the farmers' doubts. Will it be worth while, for example, for the man in Nebraska to buy "feeders" from the west, feed them on corn and ship them to the Chicago market as fat stock? There is doubt whether that operation will pay, and that doubt is reflected now in the difference on the Chicago market between the price of finished cattle and the price of feeders and stockers, because the demand for the latter is abnormally small for this time of year.

Again, take the matter of dairy cattle. We have some 22,000,000 dairy cattle in this country. Nearly a fifth of the dairy herds, on the average all through the country, go to the slaughter every year. The exact figure in New York State seems to be 17 per cent. In New York it was found that between April first of this year and April first of last year, the number of dairy cattle going to the slaughter, in addition to the normal 17 per cent, amounted to an extra 14 per cent, due, in brief, to the high cost of production. A still more serious situation was revealed when it was found that where a year

ago there were 300,000 heifers being raised for dairy use, this year there are in round numbers, only 225,000 or one-quarter less.

In sheep the losses have been very heavy from the hard winter in the west; and a great majority of the sheep, about two-thirds of them, are west of the one hundredth meridian. The crop of lambs, roughly speaking, is said to be about 50 per cent of the normal, and in addition to that very large numbers of the lambs have gone under contract into the hands of feeders, so that fewer of them will be raised than usual. We have fewer sheep in the United States, and at the same time an enormous rise in the price of wool and in the necessity for wool for war purposes.

All this seems to me to point to a simple conclusion, which is that the world situation, the American situation, and the demands of the war all point to the necessity for a very large emphasis upon livestock production as against grain production in the United States.

It is true, of course, that the various parts of the country must produce what their physical conditions prescribe. You cannot raise peanuts in North Dakota nor truck in the Panhandle of Texas. But there is an enormous area in the country in which one product or another can be increased as the needs arise; and in that area, which is abundantly sufficient to supply all we need in the way of increased livestock production—in that area, as I see it, the need for more livestock is greater than the need for more grain.

In spite of early frosts we are likely to have in our corn crop the largest crop of any grain ever raised in any country at any time since the world began. The estimate of three and one-quarter billion bushels allowed, I am informed, for a certain amount of damage from frost, and the chances were if there had been no frost the total crop might have amounted to 3,800,000,000 or even 4,000,000,000 bushels.

There is likely to be a very considerable surplus. Feed for livestock will be in excess of animals to consume it. Thus it is estimated by a man who ought to know that the south will produce this year, beyond the supply required to feed all its livestock, feed sufficient for 500,000 head. In the south, in the corn belt, and elsewhere, we shall have an exceedingly heavy corn crop and roughage enough to supply and more than supply all the livestock we can put upon it.

Obviously, then, the situation points to that form of agriculture which, in addition to all the considerations I have mentioned, has this other striking advantage in time of war, that it can be handled with a smaller expenditure for labor than any other. You can raise more agricultural products in the form of livestock with less man power than you can grain, as everyone knows.

So the elements which indicate strong emphasis on an agricultural policy of promoting livestock production are briefly: abundance of feed, insuring relative cheapness; shortage of agricultural labor, necessarily resulting in a premium on meat products rather than on grain; a shortage of all kinds of livestock as measured by the certain demand, which means good prices for the producer; the demand for a large increase in exports of meat (we have been exporting 200 or 300 per cent more pork products than we did before the war, and we must export still more, which furnishes additional reason why prices should be high); and the fact—and it is a very important one—that even if there were no war, to export meats is vastly wiser than to export grains. For when you export wheat, you export soil fertility with it. When you export meats you create fertility and keep it at home; so that the future richness of the land argues likewise for livestock as the trend which we ought to follow in our agricultural policy.

The essential lesson of the war, as I have tried to indicate, seems to me to be that teamplay, to a degree hitherto unknown, has become the indispensable condition of national success. If, then, we are to stimulate agriculture in the United States, and if the trend of our agricultural policy looks toward livestock rather than toward grain, then it is absolutely essential to bring to that stimulation this same point of view of teamplay. Therefore the organization of American farmers has become indispensable. The spread of coöperation among the producers of livestock and of grains on the farm is an essential factor in winning the war.

The farmer is a business man like any other. He is in business to support his family. It is true that he earns a very much smaller return than any other business man—probably less than \$400 a year in money for his work. He has, in addition, a house to live in and produce from the farm worth perhaps a couple of hundred dollars in cash.

The farmer, like anybody else, will remain in the business, or in

any particular part of the business, just in proportion to the chance he has of making a living. He will be guided in his business, like any other business man, by his chance of profit and success. He will trend toward grain, livestock, truck, other conditions being equal, according to his belief that there is in any one of these lines a reasonable return for his labor and his investment.

We have dealt with the farmer for years as if he were a fixture that could not move away; as if he were a mere maker of agricultural products, and not a man with a family to whom the ordinary human considerations are just as important as they are to anybody else. Now we have come to the time when the nation as a whole must recognize the dominating position which has come to the man who produces food from the soil. Although our population is but one-third agricultural and two-thirds industrial, still the emphasis today is on the man who grows things out of the ground rather than on the man who makes things in a factory.

If it is true that the general lines of policy I have tried to outline are sound, then the time has come when a reconstruction of the national point of view about agriculture is absolutely essential. Not less so is the reconstruction of the farmer's point of view about himself. The introduction of coöperative methods among producers is absolutely vital to success in our agricultural policy.

An integral part of the success of any agricultural policy we may adopt must be the recognition of the dominant part the farmer is playing in the affairs of this country and of the world. He has been set aside. He has not had his fair share of influence in the government, nor his fair share in the benefits of government, and he is beginning to understand it and to consider what he shall do about it.

If we are to meet the obligations that have been imposed upon us by the war, the first of which is the production of food on a large scale, we must do three things: first, direct our efforts mainly toward livestock rather than mainly toward grain; second, convince the agricultural producers of this country that their efforts in producing livestock will be met by a fair remuneration when that livestock comes to be marketed; and third, see to it that the farmer has what he has never had sufficiently before, his fair and reasonable share and part in determining the plans and policies of the country, of which he forms the underlying and most essential part.